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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to help school administrators to consider the impact of cultural diversity in the development and implementation of school disciplinary policies while complying with the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. First it examines how cultural bias, misunderstanding, and insensitivity may impede student and teacher success. Suggestions are offered on ways to compare school data related to student achievement and student disciplinary practices that may indicate significant cultural differences. Next, the guide examines prevention efforts that focus on improvement in student academic achievement, especially student disciplinary practices that employ instructive, as opposed to simple, aversive consequences for undesired behavior. The four main chapters have the following titles: (1) "The Role of Culture in Governing Values, Beliefs, and Behavior"; (2) "Exploring Student Achievement Data, Discipline Data, and Interactions with School Personnel"; (3) "Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students"; and (4) Developing Effective Disciplinary Practices for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students". (Contains 78 references.) (DB)

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CASE/CCBD MINI-LIBRARY SERIES
Safe, Drug-Free, and Effective Schools

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Cultural Sensitivity in the Implementation of Discipline Policies and Practices

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CASE is an international and professional organization committed to facilitating the education and general welfare of students with disabilities. CASE promotes professional leadership and provides special education administrators with opportunities for personal and professional development.

Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

About the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders

CCBD is an international and professional organization committed to promoting and facilitating the education and general welfare of children and youth with behavioral and emotional disorders. CCBD, whose members include educators, parents, mental health personnel, and a variety of other professionals, actively pursues quality educational services and program alternatives for persons with behavioral disorders, advocates for the needs of such children and youth, emphasizes research and professional growth as vehicles for better understanding behavioral disorders, and provides professional support for persons who are involved with and serve children and youth with behavioral disorders.

In advocating for the professionals in the field of behavioral disorders, CCBD (a division of the Council for Exceptional Children) endorses the Standards for Professional Practice and Code of Ethics adopted by the Delegate Assembly of the Council for Exceptional Children in 1983.

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Foreword

Nationwide, school personnel are working to ensure every student a safe, drug-free, quality education. There is no doubt about either the importance or complexity of that task. With mounting pressure to ensure student safety, some school divisions have adopted a so-called zero-tolerance policy of student discipline. No one would quarrel with the original intent of zero tolerance, namely, to protect students from dangerous weapons in schools. However, some authorities do question the logic behind applying the same philosophy to less serious offenses, such as when a student fails to participate in class discussion. Others argue that there are discrepancies in the way current disciplinary policies are being applied. Evidence exists that students from culturally diverse backgrounds often are disproportionately subjected to more severe treatment. A similar concern has been voiced on behalf of students with disabilities. Increasingly, administrators, teachers, and parents are calling for a reasonable middle ground in addressing the issue of student discipline.

At the same time, schools are finding that some established instructional practices are at odds with the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Although we are witnessing an increase in the use of curricular materials and instructional procedures that reflect greater cultural sensitivity, there is more to be done in this area. With these issues in mind, it is encouraging to find a growing acceptance that a reciprocal relationship exists between learning and behavior problems and that it is shortsighted to address one and ignore the other. Accordingly, more and more administrators, faculty, and staff are redefining the culture of their schools and creating a climate in which school-wide and

classroom-level positive academic and behavior supports are in place for all students.

Further impetus for changing current practices stems from the 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which contains provisions that address both the academic and nonacademic performance of students with disabilities. For example, IDEA stipulates that education personnel must not only acknowledge the connection between learning and behavior problems, but also, under certain conditions, take specific steps to address the problem(s). If a student's classroom behavior impedes his or her academic progress or that of classmates, it may signal a need to change one or more aspects of the curriculum, management, or instruction. In limited instances, schools must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and then develop a positive behavioral intervention plan and supports. In that way, more serious learning or behavior problems (usually both) can be addressed.

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) and the Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders (CCBD) have long shared a common concern about students with and without disabilities. In light of the challenges faced in schools, the leaders of these two divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) decided to cosponsor two institutes on best practices for working with students with learning and behavior problems. We drew upon the expertise of our members to produce a mini-library series that corresponds with the content of these institutes. We are grateful to those who served as both presenters and authors. We also acknowledge those who served as reviewers of these volumes: Charlene Greene (CASE), Bev Johns (CCBD), Bev McCoud (CASE), Russ Skiba (CCBD), Cheryl Zinszer (CASE), John Faust (CASE), and Jim McCormick (CASE). Together, they have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the challenges of 21st century schools.

Lyndal M. Bullock, Jim Chapple, and Robert A. Gable
Series Editors

Introduction 1

Approximately 32% of the students in the U.S. public schools come from cultural backgrounds that differ from the European American macroculture (Murdock, 1995). By the year 2025, it is estimated that this number will rise to over 50% of the school-age population. Within many of our urban schools, the majority of students are from impoverished families who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse. The majority of the teachers and administrators in these schools, however, are monolingual, white, and middle class (Zeichner, 1993). The difference in ethnic, cultural, and/or language backgrounds between students and school personnel often creates obstacles to success for these students. There is ample evidence that students from diverse cultural backgrounds often struggle to meet the expectations of the typical school program.

Culturally and linguistically diverse students are more likely to be placed in a low-track curriculum and have less access to advanced classes and gifted programs (Keleher & Johnson, 2001) than their white, middle-class peers. Moreover, these students are significantly more likely to fail one or more classes or to drop out or be "pushed out" of school, and they are less likely to graduate. African American, Latino, and Native American students are suspended and expelled in numbers vastly disproportionate to those of their European American peers and are often given harsher punishments for similar offenses. Even in schools attempting to be culturally sensitive, teachers and administrators often interact unconsciously in ways that place these students at greater risk for failure (Rist, 1970).

In the discussion that follows, we explore the impact of cultural diversity on student academic and behavioral success. We pro-

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vide administrators information with which to explore the potential areas of cultural bias, misunderstanding, and insensitivity that may impede student and teacher success in their schools. Specifically, we offer administrators guidance on ways to compare their schools' data related to student achievement and student disciplinary practices that may indicate significant cultural differences. Next, we examine prevention efforts that focus on improvement in student academic achievement. We discuss student disciplinary practices that employ instructive, as opposed to simply aversive, consequences for undesired behavior. Finally, we offer practical suggestions for addressing common areas of concern for many educators.

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The Role of Culture in Governing Values, Beliefs, and Behavior

Culture comprises the totality of learned behavior. This complex whole, which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits, is acquired by an individual as part of a society (Pai, 1990). Everyone has a cultural heritage that governs his or her learned behavior in the context of a given social system. Culture provides the lens through which we view, evaluate, and judge the events in our lives. Our cultural view of the world is learned through both formal and informal instruction, observation of others, and written and oral histories. Our cultural norms, values, and beliefs are reflected in our language; they serve to focus, and at times limit, our understanding of the world.

Shared cultural patterns bind people together into an identifiable group and allow them to communicate and interact with each other with a certain level of predictability, comfort, and ease. Although there may be some areas of disagreement, this shared culture provides the context for mutual understanding. Most of us are not aware of the existence of our shared cultural beliefs until confronted with someone who displays a different cultural understanding. Our own cultural view of the world is often judged as "common sense" for the interpretation of world events. We have difficulty understanding that others may interpret these same events quite differently. This inability to perceive the world outside of our own cultural view and accept the validity of other cultural interpretations is termed *ethnocentrism*. Ethnocentrism is an

anthropologically common characteristic of all cultures (Yetman, 1985). Each culture views its own customs, beliefs, and traits as natural, correct, and typically superior to those of other cultures.

When cultural groups come into contact with one another, there is a high potential for misunderstanding, misperception, and conflict. When two or more cultural groups interact, specific cultural differences (e.g., dress, religious beliefs) become issues that are often highlighted and may become associated with group membership and pride. Cultural differences are often exacerbated and are more likely to result in conflict if these cultural groups experience differential status (e.g., subordination, domination) (Erickson, 1997; Ogbu, 1990). When one cultural group feels powerless or marginalized by another group, members of the alienated group may begin to accentuate their differences as a means of expressing their desire to remain distinct from the dominant culture (Ogbu, 1990). Members of cultural groups without power "usually react to their subordination and exploitation by forming ambivalent or oppositional identities as well as oppositional cultural frames of reference" (Ogbu, 1988, p.176). This oppositional identity often plays a significant role in the school setting because members of culturally and linguistically diverse groups may equate doing well in school with rejecting their own heritage and accepting that of the dominant European American macroculture.

On the other hand, members of the dominant cultural group experience a sense of *privilege* based on the fact that their cultural view will be strongly supported in the social context of the community. The community functions on the basis of the dominant culture. Thus, members of this culture will experience a sense of comfort as they interact within the confines of that culture. They often are not overtly aware of their privilege. In contrast, members of subordinate cultures will be constantly confronted with the difference of their race, language, behavioral traits, values, religion, and so on.

Often members of the dominant culture, in an effort to ensure a nonbiased approach to people from other cultures, attempt to stress so-called color-blindness, or an inability to recognize cultural differences (Schofield, 1997). These individuals indicate that

they treat everyone the same—suggesting that treating everyone the same is synonymous with treating everyone fairly. In most cases, treating everyone the same means treating everyone as if they were members of the dominant cultural group. Problems arise from the fact that *not* everyone is the same and that engaging everyone from a single cultural perspective will place some cultural groups at a distinct disadvantage.

Culture Diversity and the School

Public schools in the United States bring together large numbers of children from diverse backgrounds. Teachers and administrators have the immense task of attempting to promote the academic success and social development of all children. This is complicated by the fact that our schools traditionally reflect the cultural views of the European American macroculture, a culture shared by the majority of teachers and administrators. Many culturally and linguistically diverse students, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and those whose religious beliefs differ from those of the dominant culture may have their first exposure to this macroculture when they enter school. For many of these children, understanding the new and different expectations for their behavior will be difficult. If school personnel are not sensitive to the cultural diversity in their schools, they may begin to reprimand and punish children for behavior that is sanctioned in their own cultures. This will confuse the students and may begin to alienate them from the school setting.

Children do not enter school equally prepared to meet the educational and social challenges they will confront. Significant differences exist that will greatly impact their success (e.g., phonemic awareness, language skills, learning styles). For example, many children living in poverty enter school with fewer than 100 hours of exposure to written text (e.g., being read to by parents and others), while children from middle- and upper-class homes have well over 1,000 hours of exposure (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Likewise, the vocabulary of children from impoverished backgrounds may be less than half that of middle-class children at the point of entering preschool (Apple, 1988). Since language devel-

opment from this point forward tends to build upon itself, this initial ability differential often becomes even greater as children progress in school. Unfortunately, there is a high correlation between poverty and cultural and ethnic minority status in this country. As a result, culturally and linguistically diverse students are often at an increased risk for academic failure.

Often the cultural beliefs and customs of these students support a learning style that differs from that commonly supported in many schools. For example, the literature suggests many African American children are more familiar with oral experiences, physical activity, and highly interpersonal relationships. These students are likely to work best with instruction fostering open group discussions, active projects, and collaborative work. They may not do as well when asked to work independently on information that is provided in a more didactic fashion while they are expected to sit quietly and listen. As a result, these students may appear less attentive, more active, and less cooperative than many of their peers from the dominant culture.

Teachers are likely to provide these students with numerous verbal reprimands and other messages that indicate they are not as successful as their peers. Over time, these students may become disillusioned with their potential as students. Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often enter school with an increased risk for failure. As if this level of risk were not enough, these children must also confront the need to straddle two cultures as they attempt to learn to function within a cultural milieu that differs from their own.

Teachers often view culturally dictated behaviors as deficiencies rather than differences. Far too often, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are required to abandon the customs, beliefs, and values held by their culture in order to be successful in the school setting. Teachers and administrators may even punish students for the expression of their cultural heritage without necessarily meaning to do so. For example, various cultures hold different customs of interpersonal interaction that may be misinterpreted by members of other cultures. Hawaiian children are taught that it is appropriate to initiate their response

in a conversation prior to the close of the initial speaker's statement (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Thus, Hawaiian speakers often interrupt others. These students would be considered rude in most schools and could be harshly reprimanded for what is actually culturally appropriate behavior.

In a similar vein, many African American children are taught to speak in a highly expressive and animated manner to indicate interest and concern. They are likely to appear quite intense when engaging in a discussion that involves an issue of importance to them (Kochman, 1981). Although these students may become loud and very expressive, this does not signal loss of control on their part. In contrast, European American children are taught to remain calm in a discussion and to support their views with observable facts. An increase in volume and heightened animation for most European Americans indicates a potential loss of control.

Thus, the potential for cultural misunderstanding is high when an African American student is discussing an important issue (e.g., why he or she behaved in a given manner that was culturally appropriate) with a European American teacher or administrator. The student may become increasing loud and animated to signal concern about an issue, while the teacher interprets this behavior as losing control. As the teacher indicates that the student needs to calm down, the student may become more animated to stress the fact that he or she is not losing control. In the end, the cultural misunderstanding could lead to a complete communication breakdown in which neither party feels successful. The power differential between the student and the teacher will likely result in a situation in which the teacher's perception of the situation is the accepted statement of fact. The student may be punished for engaging in so-called insubordinate behavior, even though the student was only attempting to state the case in a manner that he or she would consider culturally appropriate.

School as the Agent for Cultural Transmission

The delivery of an education cannot be culture-free. The very act of education involves the teaching and transfer of cultural infor-

mation. The school plays a significant role in our society as an institution to promote the transmittal of American culture and serves to promote assimilation and acculturation. Through assimilation, cultural groups change as the result of continued interaction. Acculturation involves the adoption of the cultural patterns of one cultural group (typically the dominant culture) by another.

The challenge we face as educators is to identify the specific content of the cultural information that should be transmitted as part of the academic curriculum and through various school policies. As a nation, we are not simply a composite of various cultural values and beliefs. The concept of the "melting pot" has never quite materialized. We are more like a quilt comprising numerous cultural groups. In the past, many cultural groups either were not permitted or chose not to assimilate into the dominant American culture. Thus, we are left with diverse cultural groups living in close proximity to one another. These groups have a great deal in common, yet each retains much of its original cultural heritage. As a nation, we have morally and legally committed ourselves to value the multiple cultures of our citizens, and we profess to be a culturally pluralistic society. In that regard, Pratte (1979) identified the following three criteria for the application of cultural pluralism to a society:

1. Cultural diversity is exhibited in the society in the form of a number of groups that hold different political, racial, religious, ethnic, or economic cultural patterns.
2. These coexisting groups hold, or at least approximate, equal political, economic, and educational opportunity.
3. There is a commitment to the values of cultural pluralism as a basis for a viable system of social organization. (p. 141)

One might question whether our society has yet met the criteria to be considered a pluralistic society. While laws exist to mandate equal political, economic, and educational opportunity, these ideals have yet to be realized. Nevertheless, if we profess to honor the value and integrity of the multiple cultures comprising our

nation, then teachers and administrators must become comfortable with the delivery of a truly multicultural education. It follows that the academic curriculum should reflect a cross-cultural perspective. A multicultural education places an emphasis not only on the interaction of members across race and ethnicity, but also across class and gender. Multicultural education is based on a number of fundamental assumptions (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998):

- Cultural differences have strength and value.
- Schools should be models for the expression of human rights and respect for cultural differences.
- Social justice and equality for all people should be of paramount importance in the design and delivery of curricula.
- Attitudes and values that are necessary for the continuation of a democratic society can be promoted in the schools.
- Schooling can provide the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among cultural groups.
- Educators working with families and communities can create an environment that is supportive of multiculturalism. (p. 28)

To embody a multicultural educational perspective, school boards and school administrators must strive to promote schools in which the composition of the faculty, administration, and other staff accurately reflect the composition of the population of the United States. Differences in academic achievement levels between males, females, majority, and traditionally underrepresented group members, and students from different social classes must be eliminated through effective instruction. The school curriculum should incorporate the contributions of many cultural groups and integrate multiple perspectives on subject matter and the current events discussed. This must include more than celebrating African American History Month and providing a brief discussion of the impact of European expansionism on the Native American peoples.

Instructional materials should be free of biases, omissions, and stereotypes. Cultural differences among students must be treated as differences rather than deficiencies that must be remediated in compensatory programs. Most important, students should be able to use their own cultural resources and voices to develop new knowledge and skills and to explore subject matter critically. Such an environment would support students' willingness to take risks academically—even those students who are at risk for academic failure. Students would feel free to explore issues of power and privilege and to try out various approaches to knowledge and understanding outside of their own experience.

Education is a cross-cultural encounter. Educators given the responsibility to promote the academic achievement and social development of their students need knowledge and skills for working effectively in a culturally diverse society. Teachers and administrators must become cognizant of cultural differences. They need to be aware of the various cultural groups that comprise their school and become sensitive to their cultural differences and how these might play out in the school setting. Few would argue that the U.S. educational system has failed to serve all students equally well. Today, there should be little disagreement that teachers and administrators must be able to deal with questions of race, intergroup relations, and other controversial issues objectively, honestly, frankly, and professionally.

If we are to honor and value our students' cultures, school discipline policies must take their cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors into consideration. Educators must make an effort to understand student behavior, including undesired behavior, from the student's cultural perspective, since many student behaviors are functional from that perspective. That is, these behaviors result in consequences that meet the student's needs and desires. Efforts to change student behaviors must go beyond simply attempting to suppress the display of undesired behaviors. Effective discipline programs will teach students how to behave in socially appropriate ways to meet their needs and desires. Instruction in desired behavior must be accomplished in a manner that does not devalue the student's cultural heritage.

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Much of the concern about disproportionate discipline results from school administrators' overdependency on punitive and exclusionary consequences for undesired behavior. In their school discipline efforts, educators should attempt to take advantage of what is known about learning (Van Acker, 2000) to instruct students in desired behavior. While disciplinary practices must seek to make the undesired behavior less efficient in meeting the student's needs and desires, effective discipline practices must also:

- Directly teach expected behaviors.
- Provide students with numerous opportunities to practice these expected behaviors with guidance.
- Deliver feedback on student performance to promote success.

Administrators must work with teachers and staff to become creative in the development of culturally sensitive instructional consequences for challenging student behavior.

There is compelling evidence that children from different racial, ethnic, and social classes are likely to experience vastly different educational outcomes (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). Indeed, children differing along these variables are likely to attend different types of schools (Kozol, 1991), receive different types of instruction, study different curricula, and leave school at different points along the K through 12 continuum. As a result, when children end their school careers, they differ from each other more than they did when they first entered school (Persell, 1993). If these differences are to be prevented and/or remedied, school administrators must take the time regularly to examine school-based data to systematically identify potential areas of cultural bias, misperception, and misunderstanding.

3

Exploring Student Achievement Data, Discipline Data, and Interactions with School Personnel

One of the initial activities an administrator or a school disciplinary team should do when attempting to gain a better understanding of the disciplinary issues in a school is to analyze student academic performance and school disciplinary referrals. As a result of increased standardized testing and public demands for accountability, academic achievement measures for students are not difficult to obtain. As we mentioned earlier, disciplinary problems often result from students' failure to meet the academic demands of the school. An examination of academic performance records will often alert the administrator and the faculty to problem areas in curriculum and instruction.

Achievement Data

One of the most effective ways to prevent the development of serious problem behavior is to ensure students' academic success. Few students act out in class when they are performing well academically. The identification of program areas that fail to foster student success should become a priority in the school's overall improvement plan. We discuss specific suggestions related to addressing the academic needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students in Chapter 4.

The following discussion is based on two separate fictitious but very plausible sets of data on student performance in reading comprehension and mathematics. Data for the same class of students are compared between third grade and sixth grade.

The reading comprehension score for the total student group approximated the national average. While we would expect roughly 25% of the students to fall into each quartile, the data indicate a slightly greater proportion falling in the lower two quartiles (32% in each) and a slightly lower proportion than expected in the upper quartiles (17% in Quartile 3 and 19% in Quartile 4). By grade 6, however, 86% of the students demonstrated reading comprehension performance in the lowest two quartiles. In exploring the same data across gender, we find that scores declined for both boys and girls. When we examine performance by ethnicity, we find that the decline was most dramatic for Asian American and Latino students. European American students generally held their own across the 4-year period, and African American students posted a slight increase in reading comprehension performance. The general decline of reading comprehension performance for Asian American and Latino students across the 4 years of instruction might indicate that school personnel need to improve the reading curriculum and/or instructional program. Teachers and administrators should be concerned that the program does little to remedy the ethnic disparities in performance.

Looking again at our fictitious data, we find that students did better in mathematics than in reading comprehension. In the third grade, performance for the total group again approximates the national average. Over time, the total group scores show a moderate improvement. In the third grade, 45% of students performed within the upper two quartiles. By sixth grade, 63% placed within the upper two quartiles. The mathematics program appears to support improved performance across gender and ethnic groups with the exception of Latino students, who showed a mild decline in their scores.

In the example provided, the disparity of academic performance between students with a European American cultural back-

ground and students from other cultural groups is evident. Certainly, other factors (e.g., poverty) influence academic performance, but administrators and teachers need to attend to cultural differences and implement intensive efforts to eliminate the disparities in performance. To gain a more accurate picture of the situation, an administrator might want to disaggregate the data to examine only those students who have been in the school for the entire 4-year span between assessments. This would help correct for high student mobility and reduce the chance of evaluating the instructional program based on a number of students who were not actually educated in that program.

Disciplinary Data

Another data source that should be examined in an effort to understand the school's disciplinary program is the record of past disciplinary actions. Schools are mandated to maintain records on student discipline (e.g., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972). The specificity of these data varies from district to district. One suggestion that might prove helpful is to explore the school's existing disciplinary data in an effort to identify areas of concern and determine whether the present system of tracking student disciplinary referrals provides enough specificity to inform practice. If the current data are less than satisfactory, implementing a more detailed system of tracking referrals and disciplinary data is recommended.

In the paragraphs that follow, sample disciplinary referral information from another fictitious school is discussed. The school in question has a high number of disciplinary referrals for disruption of the learning environment (31% of referrals), being tardy to class (16.7%), disrespect/insubordination (15%), and fighting (11.7%). These behaviors indicate areas in which school personnel need to provide increased instruction in desired and expected responses. For example, what behaviors are administrators and teachers looking for as an indication of respect? Specifically, how can a student disagree with a teacher or administrator in a respectful manner? Are these behaviors being taught to students within the school?

A closer examination of this school's disciplinary referral data suggests that some student groups are referred for discipline disproportionately. African American students are referred at a disproportionately high rate for all offenses. In fact, African American students are referred at a rate of more than twice the rate (30.9% of all referrals) one would anticipate given their proportion of the student population (14.3%). Native American students are also referred at a rate greater than one might expect. The fact that the school has only three students of Native American descent makes these data difficult to interpret, however. Interestingly, European American students are referred at a rate (37.9%) significantly below the level that might be expected based on their proportion of the student population (53.7%).

In exploring specific behaviors, we find that some students appear to be referred disproportionately for disciplinary action for certain offenses. Culturally and linguistically diverse student groups are far more likely to be referred for disruption of the classroom learning environment and failure to complete work. In this case, the administrator might want to explore the content and manner of instruction to ensure that it supports cultural and linguistic diversity.

Another consideration related to disciplinary referrals relates to the nature of the consequences provided. The school administrators rely heavily on in-school suspension (36.9% of consequences), discussion with the student (21%), and parental contact (15.5%) as the consequences for various infractions. Exclusionary practices (i.e., in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, time-out, alternate placement, expulsion) constitute the majority of responses to undesired behavior. It would be useful to ask how simply removing a child from the situation will ensure improved behavior and increased academic success.

The data from this fictitious school also indicate differential distribution of consequences on the basis of gender and ethnicity. A discussion of the problem situation is significantly more likely to be employed as the consequence when the offender is female, Native American, or European American. Likewise, parental contact is more likely to be provided as a consequence to a female

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and/or a European American student. In contrast, African American students are more likely to be provided out-of-school suspension than are students in other groups. Unfortunately, the available data fail to identify the level of seriousness or intensity of similar offenses. Thus, we cannot make definitive statements that some students are being treated more or less harshly for the same offenses. Nevertheless, these data suggest that the administrator and teachers should examine their disciplinary practices carefully to address what appears to be cultural bias or cultural misunderstanding. Application of different disciplinary practices will further fuel power differences between cultural groups and may increase student alienation, feelings of persecution, and the development of an oppositional identity.

Interactions Between Students and School Personnel

Classroom interactions between teachers and students constitute the major part of the educational process for most students. There is ample evidence in the literature to suggest that culturally and linguistically diverse students experience vastly different interactions with their teachers than do most students from the European American macroculture (Kunjufu, 1990; Rist, 1970). Following are six considerations that teachers or administrators can use to examine the nature of their interactions with students (Boutte, 1999):

1. *Ratio of positive to negative comments.* Educators may want to identify the number of positive and affirmative statements provided some students or groups of students compared to the number of negative or corrective statements being given. If students consistently hear more negative statements, they can become discouraged and learn that "school is not for them."
2. *Frequency of interactions.* Closely related to the quality of responses is the quantity of responses. How often do teachers or administrators interact with the students in their care? Are there students who become "invisible" in classroom discourse? Many factors can influence the unconscious differen-

tial treatment of students (e.g., personality, location in the classroom). It is not unusual, for example, to identify one student in a classroom who gets more opportunities to respond academically than all of the other students combined. Likewise, often one student gets more verbal reprimand and/or academic correction than all other students combined.

3. *Nonverbal communication.* Teachers' nonverbal communication can provide subtle, yet powerful, messages to students. Do you smile more frequently at some students? Do you portray less patience with some students? Are you more likely to display anger for the inappropriate behavior of some students rather than others?
4. *Differences in grouping patterns.* Teachers and administrators are encouraged to examine the composition of the low-ability and high-ability groups within their school and classrooms. Are there significant differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, or social class? If so, there may be a reason for concern. Do students in high-ability groups get more instructional time, more creative lessons, or more resources than those in lower-ability groups?
5. *Labeling.* Often culturally and linguistically diverse students are more likely than their European American peers to be included in negatively labeled groups (e.g., low achievers, students with emotional or behavioral disorders, students with learning disabilities).
6. *Reaction time.* Teachers and administrators often treat students and student groups differently with regard to how frequently and/or how long they take to respond to bids for attention. Some students are ignored more frequently, or they are required to wait considerably longer to get teacher attention when asking questions or needing assistance. Likewise, when students are asked to respond, teachers often provide longer response times for some students than others. "African American children learn very early that if they pause a minute, the teacher will go on to the next child" (Boutte, 1999, p. 90).

Administrators are encouraged to establish systems to provide teachers with feedback related to their interactions with students. For more information on this topic, readers are encouraged to examine another monograph in this CCBD/CASE series: *The Role of the School Administrator in the Development of the School's Social Context* (Van Acker, 2002).

Once an administrator or school discipline team has explored the data for a school, efforts to address concerns related to disparate academic performance, differential treatment in referral and/or disciplinary practices, and teacher interaction must be initiated. In the remainder of this monograph, we will explore actions that can be taken to this end.

4

Effective Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

Teachers, support staff, and pupil personnel staff, as well as administrators, need to continually develop their knowledge of different cultures, emphasizing the commonalities while identifying academically relevant features among cultures. Ironically, development of cultural knowledge often leads to inappropriate overgeneralizations. Educators need to be reminded of the variations among groups. African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans do not represent only four sets of cultural characteristics. There is a great deal of variation within diverse ethnic and racial groups just as there is great variation among the European American majority population. Variations may be a result of the number of years spent living in the United States, conditions under which families immigrated (e.g., escaping war, seeking employment), or previous living and schooling experiences in the United States. Similarly, smaller populations such as those from Croatian, South African, Pakistani, and Polish backgrounds are very diverse, and we need to learn about and develop ways to support their learning in our classrooms. Ishii-Jordan (1997) noted that students' learning styles, assumptions about formal education, and comfort level in overt social relationships impact how they respond to the teacher's classroom style and behavioral expectations. Clearly, these are issues that need to be considered in planning instruction.

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As our society becomes increasingly diverse, it is apparent that it is not possible or logical to try to identify a single approach to instruction that is appropriate for all students. By the same token, it is not possible to design a unique program for each individual that will be completely compatible with that child's previous schooling experiences and/or the teaching and learning patterns the child experiences at home. We can, however, adapt instructional practices that reflect more tolerance of individual differences and that build upon the unique sets of experiences, preferences, knowledge, skills, and customs that culturally and linguistically diverse students bring to our schools. This also implies learning as much as we can about the children that we work with as we design instructional practices.

The relationship between academic achievement and social behavior has been amply documented (cf., Sloane, 1988; Walker, 1997). Students of all backgrounds need to be provided with opportunities to participate in challenging and rigorous instruction that serves to develop higher-order thinking skills. By using a variety of classroom grouping structures, incorporating the students' background experiences and knowledge as well as their preferred modes of interaction, and providing supports that optimize the possibility for academic success, teachers can greatly reduce students' disruptive behaviors. That is, the focus of instruction needs to be on increasing academic learning rather than behavior control. Some recommended practices are described in the following sections. We suggest consulting the original sources for more detailed information on their implementation.

Academic Instruction

Throughout the literature regarding recommended instructional practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students, several themes appear:

- Addressing a range of cognitive learning styles.
- Relating concepts and using materials that are relevant to students' backgrounds and experiences.

- Using a variety of methods and modalities in the presentation of instruction.
- Including the interests of the students (e.g., music, art, sports).
- Making information, concepts, and methods meaningful to students.

One basic principle that traditionally has been lost in special education practice is that the best way to learn to read and write is by reading and writing. This means that students need to be surrounded by print and provided with multiple opportunities throughout the school day to use written text for gaining information, enjoyment, development of spelling and writing skills, communicating, and so forth. Teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse children and/or those with specific educational disabilities—often pressured by the need to meet explicit reading, writing, and math skills objectives—may lose sight of the bigger literacy development picture and concentrate their efforts on teaching isolated skills. While teaching explicit skills and strategies is an important part of the curriculum, it does not need to occur in the absence of a holistic instructional program. The research literature and books provide countless examples of how teachers can provide direct instruction of explicit skills and strategies within a whole language setting (cf., Dudley-Marling & Stires, 1990).

Authentic, holistic literacy and mathematics instruction, with specific, explicit teaching of strategies and concepts, provides a format for supporting most students who have diverse cultural and linguistic needs as well as those who have disabilities. Echevarria and McDonough (1995) demonstrated successful use of a holistic context for learning with direct instruction of specific skills with students who were bilingual and had learning disabilities. Many researchers have urged similar practices for children with disabilities (Mather, 1992; Pressley & Rankin; 1994) and described classrooms in which such practices were very effective (Dudley-Marling & Fine, 1997; Dudley-Marling & Stires, 1990; McIntyre, Kyle, Hovda, & Clyde, 1996).

Dudley-Marling and Fine (1997) pointed out that this type of explicit instruction differs from the more traditional skills instruction in terms of how, when, and why reading skills are taught as well as the meaning attached to the learning of skills. They described a classroom environment that models reading and invites students to read. Students are encouraged to read various types of texts such as song lyrics, comic books, and newspaper articles. Directions, announcements, and samples of students' work are posted each day, as well as a chart story written by the teacher. Dudley-Marling and Fine (1997) demonstrated to students the enjoyment and power of reading by reading aloud to them every day, a practice that has been found to affect reading vocabulary, comprehension, and interests, as well as students' oral language development.

Teachers can draw middle school and high school students into literacy activities by offering a range of options for reading materials and topics for writing. Trueba (1984) invited students who were struggling in school to write about their life experiences and their home lives. The results were increased motivation and significant gains in writing skills.

Literature circles or literature-sharing groups in which students with varying reading skills and varying interests share a range of book genres have been found to be effective with second language learners and other culturally and linguistically diverse students. In these groups, students may be assigned particular roles, such as keeping track of new vocabulary, facilitating the reading and discussion, and keeping track of participants' opinions. These opportunities to share encourage students to get reading, to explore their own experiences in relationship to text, and to develop and expand their interests in reading.

Reading and its effect on other schoolwork have become a crisis in our secondary schools. Many students need to increase their reading skills beyond minimum levels in order to gain from their schooling. A useful, proven means of developing reading fluency is assisted reading, or the neurological impress method (Heckelman, 1966). Using this technique, the teacher or tutor sits slightly behind the student and reads along with him or her for not more

than 10 to 15 minutes (Purcell-Gates, 1996). During this time, the teacher or tutor maintains a reasonable, fluent pace of reading while running a finger smoothly along the print. The student matches the teacher's fluency. Raising the teacher's or tutor's voice when the student is struggling and fading when the student is more fluent provides the scaffolding that the developing reader needs. It is best to use reading material that is not associated with other skills development (e.g., comprehension, word knowledge).

As a means for assisting students in the development of reading comprehension, the Self-Monitoring Approach to Reading (SMART) (Vaughn & Estes, 1986) can be adapted. The student is taught to keep track of ongoing comprehension by marking in the margin with a check or question mark indicating understanding or confusion as he or she goes along. After the student completes a passage, the teacher models and coaches (and gradually removes these scaffolding procedures) to teach the student to reread, identify unknown vocabulary, and generate ways of solving problems (e.g., asking for help, consulting a dictionary) (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

With regard to writing, students learn best when they are engaged in meaningful activities that provide the motivation and purpose they need to persevere as they learn about spelling, mechanics, form, and other conventions of writing. Use of the writing process (Calkins, 1986) can be very effective with culturally and linguistically diverse students and students with disabilities across age groups. It is in this context that students can be made aware of and taught about such topics as spelling patterns and rules, writing conventions, meanings of word suffixes and prefixes, and contractions.

Purcell-Gates (1996) summarized the "whole-to-part-to-whole" approach to teaching reading and writing by stating that one cannot lose sight of the fact that while it is useful to work on pieces of the system in isolation at times, when these pieces are put back into the whole system, they will never look, or operate, the same as they did in the isolated work. She concluded that the more pieces can be worked on in process, the more assured the teacher can be that the whole process will improve.

The need to help students develop their metacognitive skills cannot be overemphasized. Awareness and control over their own thinking and learning pave the way for students to become better learners. Administrators might encourage teachers to engage in modeling by thinking aloud as they solve a problem, decide what to include in a story they are writing, or explain how they came about finding an answer. Through this explaining and thinking aloud, students can be made aware of various strategies that might be used to address academic and social problems.

Cooperative Learning Structures

Cooperative learning structures are frequently promoted for culturally and linguistically diverse students in general and especially for those who are placed in special education classrooms (e.g., Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998; Goodwin, 1999; Lopez-Reyna, 1997). For students who are English language learners, cooperative learning is extremely useful. Research suggests that conceptual knowledge developed through a student's native language does, with appropriate transitional support, transfer into English (Cummins, 1984, 1999, 2000; Moll,1988). Cooperative learning structures provide a context in which students are able to use their native language for teaching one another and for learning new concepts (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Lopez-Reyna, 1997). Similarly, cooperative learning groups can provide a supportive language environment in which students who are learning English are encouraged by their English-proficient peers to participate in activities for learning content knowledge, improving social skills, and developing language skills (Cohen, 1986).

While there is limited research in the use of cooperative learning with special education populations, the results are for the most part positive. Several studies with students in general education settings have shown that African American and Mexican American students perform significantly better in cooperative learning structures than in traditionally competitive classrooms. Aronsen, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, and Snapp (1978) found that

European American students achieved equally well in competitive and cooperative classrooms, whereas African American and Mexican American students performed much better in cooperative settings. Webb and Farivar (1994) reported higher levels of both giving and receiving elaborated help and higher achievement among Latino and African American students than among the European American students in the comparison group. When children are taught and encouraged to work collaboratively and are closely monitored, they are able to support one another during cognitively demanding instructional tasks. Thus, they gain access to alternative or supplemental modes of comprehension beyond what the teacher is able to provide (Au, 1995; Wittrock, 1998). This is particularly true for literacy development, in which discussion among students in pairs or small groups seems to facilitate the learning process (Stevens & Slavin, 1995).

Slavin and Maden (1999) investigated the impact of cooperative learning on interracial student interactions in 10 integrated English classes composed of 34% African American and 66% European American students. All students demonstrated improved interracial interaction and greater academic gains in the cooperative setting. African American students showed the greatest improvement, with almost twice the gains of any other group in the cooperative setting.

Cooperative learning involves much more than simply placing students in small groups and asking them to work together. Students need to be made responsible for their own learning as well as that of their peers. It is important to organize them into heterogeneous groups. Depending on the goals of the lesson, students may be grouped according to their varying levels of content knowledge, English language fluency, social status characteristics, or ability and willingness to work with others. It is also recommended that the groups be changed frequently during the school year to maintain heterogeneity.

Another critical feature of cooperative learning structures is that teachers must model high expectations, mutual trust, and respect. Teachers should become familiar with features of the students' cultures and integrate their life experiences in instruction-

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al materials, resources, and techniques (Boykin, 1982; Gay, 1997; Hale-Benson, 1986; Poplin, 1988; Tharp, 1989). It is important for the teacher to identify cognitive skill areas in which a student is knowledgeable and/or skilled, provide opportunities for the student to teach others, and point out to the rest of the class the value of that skill or knowledge. Another way to promote inclusion of students with varying levels of expertise is to prepare them prior to the lesson in such a way that significant participation is guaranteed (i.e., preteaching, not simply providing rote answers). This serves both to improve the student's involvement and self-expectations and to reinforce high expectations on the part of classmates.

In a review by Stevens and Slavin (1995), the authors concluded that essentially two components discriminated between academically effective programs and those with inconclusive results: individual accountability and group rewards for improvement. That is, students work together cooperatively to teach one another the content. Assessment of knowledge, however, must be based on the individual rather than a group. Too often, only one or two students in a cooperative group complete the group project. This does little to increase the performance of the students who do not actively participate in the project development. On the other hand, when individual scores display improvement the group is reinforced. This promotes active instruction of those students who have the greatest need for improvement. Moreover, more capable students gain from the act of teaching students of lower ability.

During the past few decades, cooperative learning methods have been developed by many individuals, including Kagan (1990), Slavin (1999), and Slavin and Maden (1999). Some of the more popular methods are Think–Pair–Share, Three-Step Interview, Learning Together, Teams–Games–Tournaments, Student Team Learning, Group Investigation, and Jigsaw.

Considerable research has been conducted to direct curricular and instructional practices that will prove effective in addressing the needs of children in diverse classrooms. Behavior problems are almost nonexistent in classes in which students are actively

engaged in learning meaningful material that they can connect to prior learning (Bennett & Smilanich, 1994). According to Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1999), teaching is one of the most powerful behavioral intervention methods available to schools. The truth of this statement is clearly illustrated by instructional strategies in which prosocial skills are promoted, such as cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching, and cross-grade peer tutoring (Van Acker, 1996). Thus, ensuring that all teachers are capable of offering a high-quality instructional program is the cornerstone of an effective discipline program.

5

Developing Effective Disciplinary Practices for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

Student behavior is a critical concern in our schools. Inappropriate and disruptive behavior can interfere dramatically with the learning of both the child who engages in the behavior and his or her peers. Behaviors that endanger others are an even greater concern; school safety is nonnegotiable. Accountability in regard to student safety and academic achievement has prompted school districts to adopt strict disciplinary policies to minimize disruptions to the educational environment. District- and school-level administrators have standardized certain disciplinary procedures and implemented security strategies to ensure that their students are safe and that the instructional environment is conducive to learning. However, many of these disciplinary practices have resulted in the suspension or expulsion of disproportionate numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students or their referral to special education programs.

Implementing effective discipline is a daunting task for any school administrator, regardless of training or experience. The difficulty is magnified in some situations when cultural differences are misunderstood or minimized. Misinterpreted cultural situations, compounded with an educator's limited formal training, knowledge, and skills in behavior management, often result in an

increased risk for office referral, detention, in- or out-of-school suspension, and expulsion. Researchers have found that often a limited number of teachers make the majority of disciplinary referrals (Skiba, 2000). Many of the behaviors to which school administrators respond are better addressed within the classroom setting through prevention and the delivery of simple, predictable consequences (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000).

According to Necochea (1997), we are seeing an era of intolerance, one in which trust does not exist between students and school personnel. This is especially true in situations that involve cross-cultural interactions. Cartledge, Tilman, and Talbert-Johnson (2001) contended that the greatest ethical challenge facing the teaching profession is the fair application of disciplinary measures for diverse student populations. Furthermore, they asserted that it is inherently unfair when a school's disciplinary practices and policies reflect the culture, mores, and needs of the dominant class and oppose the culture and interests of nondominant groups. In this chapter, we provide statistical data on exclusionary practices, review some current exclusionary practices and their impact, and highlight effective disciplinary measures.

Prevalence of Exclusionary Practices

The figures on exclusionary and punitive measures that involve culturally and linguistically diverse students—especially African American students—are staggering. In a recent review of school disciplinary responses, Skiba (2000) reported that at all grade levels through grade 12, African American students were suspended two to three times more than European American students. Data from the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) indicated that 29 states suspended over 5% of their entire African American student population, while just 4 states suspended 5% or more of the European American student population (Skiba et al., 2000). Harry and Anderson (1994) found that African American males received corporal punishment at approximately four times the expected rate and were suspended at nearly three times the expected rate. Similarly, Pauken and Daniel (1999) reported that the expulsion rate for African Americans is

two to three times higher than that for European American students who commit the same infractions. When data are included for infractions punishable by zero-tolerance policies, vast differences are identified in the nature of the consequences provided by school administrators. Students from the majority culture are much less likely than those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups to receive punitive and/or exclusionary consequences for the same offenses.

As Skiba (2000) pointed out, the original intent of zero-tolerance policies was to send a message that certain offenses, regardless of how minor, will not be tolerated by punishing all offenses severely. Unfortunately, many schools expanded the zero-tolerance policies that resulted from the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 beyond the customary 1-year expulsion for the possession of a gun to include drugs, alcohol, fighting, threats, and swearing (Skiba, 2000). An analysis of data from the Applied Research Center of Oakland, California, indicated that projected rates of expulsions and suspensions were exceeded in all 15 major cities investigated and that African American students were expelled at rates disproportionate to their numbers within the total school population (Skiba, 2000). The increases in expulsions in some school districts are extreme. For example, in the Chicago Public Schools, the number of expulsions increased from 14 in 1992–1993 to 737 in 1998–1999 (Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000).

Offenses That Lead to Exclusion

Judgment calls are not necessary in situations that jeopardize safety. Expulsions or suspensions are justified when students possess weapons with the intent to harm. In fact, most school districts' suspension policies are designed to protect employees and other students from additional verbal or physical abuse and to maintain order in the classroom (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). However, culturally and linguistically diverse students are likely to receive more severe punishment for offenses that might be considered minor if committed by other students (e.g., disobedience, disrespect, attendance problems, general classroom disruptions)

(Skiba, 2000). Students from the cultural majority display some of the same behaviors as culturally and linguistically diverse students, but often they are given the benefit of the doubt, and the consequences they are given are less disruptive to their educational program. A teacher from the same culture may view certain comments or expressions as less threatening because he or she is familiar with them. In unfamiliar situations, however, the teacher may feel that his or her authority is being compromised and that it is necessary to exert control over the situation.

Some culturally and linguistically diverse students—in particular African American males—passionately vocalize their displeasure over perceived disrespect and unfair practices. These demonstrative patterns of interactions may be viewed as overly confrontational or threatening to someone who is unfamiliar with African American styles of interaction (Kochman, 1981). Fear, stereotypical beliefs that African American males are threatening or dangerous, and other cultural misunderstandings also play a role in the significant number of these students being excluded from school.

Thus we can see that different patterns of interactions may lead to misinterpretations of the intent of a particular group of students. This false reading of intent leads some school officials to enforce disciplinary approaches that further exacerbate an oppositional identity held by many culturally and linguistically diverse students. These misunderstandings and misinterpretations strain the fragile relationships that may exist between students and the school staff, leading to minority students' being excluded because they were "disobedient and disrespectful." In contrast, the same types of behaviors could be addressed with a frank discussion with the student, a phone call to the student's home, or a parent conference. The exclusion of culturally or linguistically diverse students results in their missing academic instruction, which places them at greater risk for academic failure. As discussed earlier, this is a population that is already at increased risk for school failure. As a group, they cannot afford to be excluded from school as a way of addressing common behavior problems.

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Negative Impact of Exclusionary Practices

While most disciplinary actions are designed to eliminate or minimize certain behaviors, many current disciplinary programs employ punitive approaches that often alienate students or push them out of school completely (Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000). The various disciplinary practices employed by school administrators and teachers have many negative long-term effects. For example, Skiba (2000) reported that dropout rates increase for students who are suspended. Comparing dropout rates of high-school sophomores, he reported that 31% of those who were suspended at least once dropped out of school, as opposed to only 10% of those who were not suspended. Finally, Skiba (2000) asserted that school disciplinary problems were the strongest predictors of dropout when factored with low socioeconomic status and poor academics.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the outcome of punishment would be that students would recognize that they were at fault and not commit the same offenses again. Yet Costenbader and Markson (1998) found that most students reported that they learned very little from being suspended and that the most common reaction was anger toward the person who suspended them. Emotions of this nature contribute to a cyclical pattern of negative interactions (Cartledge et al., 2001; Shingles, 1998) that could lead to further alienation and increased suspensions due to myriad perceived and real emotions. In addition to situations' becoming more negatively charged, students who are excluded are not afforded the opportunities to receive instruction on prosocial behaviors. Often, disciplinary responses place these students in highly concentrated groups of youths who display equally challenging behaviors (e.g., in detention rooms, in-school suspension classes, on the street). Accordingly, they have more opportunities to interact with individuals with antisocial behavior. Moreover, these students may feel rejected and suffer from low self-esteem. These perceptions can lead to their participating in additional delinquent activities and exhibiting more aggressive behaviors (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

Nichols, Ludwin, and Iadicola, (1999) have linked repeated exclusions to academic failure, grade retention, negative school attitudes, and increased dropout rates. Necochea (1997) reported that these punitive measures have led to predictable negative outcomes, as evidenced by full-to-capacity jails, detention camps, juvenile halls, courts, community schools, and alternative schools. Moreover, the exclusionary practices of suspension and expulsion deny access to learning opportunities and widen achievement gaps between these students and their peers.

Teachers and students who share the same ethnic background are not exempt from discriminatory practices. Within the same culture, social class issues and generational, gender, and experiential differences can create a divide between students and teachers. In these situations, misinterpretations also may result in students' feeling disconnected from the school.

The effectiveness of punitive disciplinary practices has little empirical support (Cartledge et al., 2001; Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Skiba, 2000). Skiba (2000) found that as many as 40% of suspended students are repeat offenders. With this in mind, we must conclude that it would be more advantageous to focus on other means of addressing disciplinary problems. The dismal outcome of punitive practices serves as an impetus for educators to investigate and/or develop interventions that can greatly reduce the number of students excluded from schools each year. In particular, preventing and/or reducing the occurrence of certain behavior problems should be critical features of any discipline program.

Teacher Education and Cultural Awareness/Sensitivity as Prevention

Efforts toward prevention of behavior problems should focus on high-quality instruction, teaching desired behaviors to students (Cartledge et al., 2001), providing culturally sensitive training to school faculty, and having an effective school-wide discipline system in place (Bennett & Smilanich, 1994). "Behavior is culture

related" (Ishii-Jordan, 1997, p. 35), and not all students enter school understanding the school culture. Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to teach students those behaviors that facilitate academic and social success. According to Skiba (2000), teacher training should focus on gender, racial, and ethnic differences in school discipline, with "appropriate and culturally competent methods of classroom management" being taught (p. 17). Classroom management has been a critical teaching skill for years, but it is one area in which few teachers feel competent (Bennett & Smilanich, 1994; Skiba, 2000). Cartledge and colleagues (2001) stated, "When teachers and students are out of sync, they clash and confront each other, both consciously and unconsciously, in matters concerning proxemics (use of interpersonal distance), paralanguage (behaviors accompanying speech such as voice tone and pitch and speech rate and length), and verbal behavior (gesture, facial expression, eye gaze)." Teachers must be aware of their own cultural tendencies and how these influence their actions, be familiar with diverse cultures, and understand how these factors impact what is valued and executed in the classroom. Often, inexperienced teachers are assigned to diverse classrooms (Cartledge et al., 2001) that have lower-achieving students who display more challenging behaviors than their peers from the majority culture. A number of teachers in this situation lack effective classroom management methods and do not have high-quality instructional skills and strategies (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). In this situation, neither the students nor the teachers are in an optimal position to be successful.

Many African American students report that having a relationship with teachers and feeling that their teachers respect and care about them is important for their academic success (Cartledge et al., 2001; Skiba, 2000). Relationship-building strategies, familiarity with communication nuances, involvement in school activities, and connections with the family and community would minimize the disproportionate number of culturally and linguistically diverse students receiving disciplinary referrals (Ishii-Jordan, 1997; Townsend, 2000).

Effective Disciplinary Practices

Even culturally sensitive educators who demonstrate effective instructional practices and who engage in well-designed prevention efforts will face students who display challenging behaviors. Thus, teachers and administrators must identify effective and culturally sensitive approaches to addressing problem behavior. Effective disciplinary strategies aimed at making a lasting impact on student behavior typically will involve the following components:

- *A set of developmentally reasonable, understandable, and enforceable rules.* Rules should be kept to a minimum and must be developmentally appropriate for the students involved. The rules should be written clearly in a way that can be understood by both teachers and students. Finally, rules must be enforceable. In his book *Judicious Discipline,* Gathercoal (1990) suggested that rules should flow from "compelling state interests." These include (a) the prevention of property loss or damage; (b) the promotion of legitimate educational purposes; (c) the promotion of health and safety; and (d) the prevention of serious disruption of the educational process.
- *Active strategies to teach expected behavior, provided on a regular basis throughout the school day as an integrated part of the curriculum.* Rules should stress desired behavior and not just elucidate undesired behavior. Educators should identify the behavior they wish students to display in various situations. These behaviors must be modeled and directly taught to students. For example, if a school targets the need to teach students how to admit to their mistakes and take responsibility for their behavior, the teachers and administrators will need to model this behavior and actively teach what it means to be responsible. In addition, they will need to employ consequences that minimize student resistance to promote the acceptance of consequences. When students display improvement in taking responsibility, educators must be prepared to acknowledge and support the change in behavior.

- *A willingness to explore the functions of student behavior.* Most human behavior is purposeful, and a student's behavior often meets legitimate needs. If educators can identify how a particular undesired behavior works for a student, they can address the behavior more effectively. For example, some students act as class clowns in an effort to gain peer attention. If this is the only way a student can gain peer support, the student is not likely to surrender the behavior as the result of punishment. The student will only move away from this behavior when provided a more effective means to obtain peer affiliation. Once instruction related to this more appropriate and effective behavior has been implemented, the educator can implement efforts to make the undesired behavior less effective. For example, the teacher might implement a program to reward the peer group for ignoring the student's inappropriate behavior.

  Recently, schools have been mandated to conduct a functional behavioral assessment and to develop a positive behavior intervention plan for any behavior that might result in the excessive exclusion (e.g., more than 10 days of suspension over the academic year) of a student with an educational disability. Moreover, the behavior intervention plan must involve the use of positive behavioral supports. Similar practices might prove helpful to protect the rights of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

- *An effort to develop positive and instructional consequences for challenging behavior.* Teachers and administrators must attempt to implement consequences that take advantage of our knowledge of how children and youths learn. Consequences for behavior should (a) teach students appropriate alternative behaviors (direct instruction); (b) engage students in activities that allow them to practice the desired alternative behavior (drill and practice); and (c) provide them with direct and positive feedback on improved behavior (reinforcement) (Van Acker, 2000).

There are ways to implement an effective discipline program that is functional for all students. School-wide systems are neces-

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sary to create a climate and culture of acceptance, tolerance, high expectations, and success, both academically and socially. Numerous school-wide discipline programs have been developed (e.g., Lewis & Sugai, 1999, Scott & Nelson, 2000) that can help school administrators develop reasonable and culturally sensitive approaches to discipline. The building administrator must make sure that the necessary resources are available to have an effective program. And, the knowledge must exist to develop disciplinary practices that do not result in the disproportionate exclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students from schools. However, we must recognize that this is only one area of concern. The unequal status of some cultural groups can be addressed only through comprehensive, intensive efforts to create equity in our schools.

Conclusion 6

Most administrators recognize that schools can be either a steppingstone to student success or a place that serves to alienate and punish students. No teacher or administrator sets out to make schools and classrooms punitive environments. Unfortunately, challenging student behavior often triggers reactions that lead to undesired outcomes. When students and teachers have the additional challenge of understanding cultural nuances in each other's behavior, the potential for bias, misperception, and misunderstanding increases dramatically. If school administrators are to address both the academic and nonacademic needs of the students in their care—especially culturally and linguistically diverse students—they must be prepared to

- Assess potential cultural bias, misperception, misunderstanding, and differential treatment in their school through an examination of existing academic achievement and disciplinary referral data.
- Initiate staff development programs aimed at improving the cultural awareness and sensitivity of everyone involved with the school.
- Explore the curriculum and instructional practices to ensure a truly multicultural perspective.
- Implement effective instructional practices that promote the academic achievement and social development of every student. These instructional approaches should promote the pluralistic cultural heritage of the United States and take various learning styles into consideration.

- Seek ways to help the school reflect the pluralistic nature of the community and the nation. This includes efforts to select instructional materials and to actively promote the value and contributions of the multiple cultures reflected in our nation.
- Implement culturally sensitive rules that are developmentally appropriate, understandable, and enforceable.
- Identify expected student behaviors and integrate direct instruction of expected behaviors and opportunities to practice these behaviors throughout the curriculum.
- Identify and implement behavior intervention plans that consider the cultural implications and the possible function a particular behavior may serve for the student. These behavior intervention plans should emphasize positive behavioral supports.
- Implement instructional consequences for undesired behaviors. Whenever possible, the consequence for an undesired behavior should provide instruction in the desired alternative behavior, promote the active practice of this alternative behavior with feedback available, and promote the bonding of the student with the school and the community.

Schools face a Herculean task when attempting to provide truly equal educational opportunity to all students. The task goes beyond one of equal access to the school building. As Skiba (2000) so aptly pointed out, we must look beyond the discipline issue to eradicate or minimize cultural disparities in discipline. The inequities in the educational system include tracking practices, curriculum deficiencies (i.e., lack of diversity), poor quality of instruction, lack of physical resources, and inadequate school funding. Until all of these areas are addressed, the message we send to children and youths from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is "You don't belong here." And this raises the question: "Where do they belong? In these cultural clashes, there are no winners" (Necochea, 1997, p. 21). These kinds of observations have a fatalistic tone and imply that some students are expend-

able. Professionals in education must not let current practices continue; we can ill afford to elbow significant numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students out of the mainstream and into the subculture of the streets.

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